

February 6, 2014

Community Relations Committee Activities: Summer 2013–Early 2014

The Committee was fortunate this year to have most of its members from last year return and to add a new member, all of whom bring energy and ideas to the Committee.

Summer/Fall 2013 and Early Winter 2014:

- Summer Round House Theatre Event – Twenty-six residents attended the Round House Theatre viewing of the play *Becky Shaw* on June 13. The event was complete with a reception at which all the actors attended and mingled with the Town guests.
- July 4th Event – Approximately 500–600 residents and friends attended this annual event that returned this year to the Chevy Chase Elementary School, which proved to be a much better venue, for various reasons, than the Lawton Neighborhood Park. Of note is that the composting and recycling efforts, assisted by the Climate and Environment Committee, were extremely successful, leaving only four bags of trash.
- Habitat for Humanity – Town residents participated in two build days in August and October at the construction site where Habitat for Humanity is building 19 townhomes in Gaithersburg for first-time, low-income homeowners. Last year Town residents raised \$2,700 to make the Town a Neighborhood Build Sponsor for the project.
- Juice and Bagels in the Park – Town toddlers, preschoolers, and their families (including older siblings) gathered on October 19 for a morning of play and conversation at 9 a.m. at the Lawton Center Playground. A repeat of this lively, well-attended event is scheduled for May.
- Movie Nights for Families – Children accompanied by their parents were invited the first Friday of each month, November through March, to see such movies as *Babe*, *Monsters University*, *Happy Feet*, and *The Lorax*. Each showing proved very popular. Pizza and popcorn were served.
- Classical Music Concert – On November 17, a viola da gamba quartet concert, led by Town resident and musician Jessica Powell Eig, netted a full house in the Town Hall with an age mix of residents attending. Musicians not only played but also provided explanations of their early bowed string instruments.
- A Neighborhood Watch Block Captains Meeting was held on October 24. With the number of block captains now at 43, the Town has about 70 percent coverage. MCPD 2nd District Officer Oliver Janney provided an update to the attendees.
- Todd Hoffman invited members of the Committee to test drive and comment on the Town's new website before it went live.
- Thanksgiving Food Drive – Again this year the Town worked with Linkages to Learning (at the YMCA–Youth and Family Services), a program whose goal is to keep children in school through a variety of approaches, to provide Thanksgiving food baskets for Montgomery County Public School families in need. Each family received approximately \$50 in food and a \$25 gift card to purchase a turkey. A total of 3,350 pounds of food along with gift cards netted a generous 80 dinner baskets. The Town Office, the Lawton Center, B-CC High School, and Chevy Chase Elementary School

collected 120 donations. The B-CC High School football team provided invaluable assistance in unloading and sorting food, assembling food boxes, and loading them onto the Linkages trucks. Many children from the Town and Chevy Chase Elementary School decorated the boxes. This very successful drive not only served families in need but also involved residents and children in the effort.

- Open Meetings Act Training – On behalf of the Committee, Bridget Hartman and Ann Wild agreed to complete the online training mandated by a new state law, the Maryland Open Meetings Act, to ensure transparent government operations.
- Contribution Policy – At the request of the Town Council, the Committee was asked to review the Town Contribution Policy, adopted by the Council in 2009, and to make recommendations for changes to the policy as well as to propose a process for carrying it out. After much discussion, the suggested revised version of the policy and a document detailing procedures for implementing it were submitted by the Committee for Town Council consideration and were adopted at the Council's January meeting.
- Holiday Gift Drive – Thanks to the efforts of Cathy Wolf, Committee member emeritus, the Town partnered with the Montgomery County Abused Persons Program and Chesapeake Counseling for the annual Holiday Gift Drive for domestic violence victims and their children. Once again, Town residents proved very generous, making the drive a big success. At least \$2,500 was raised in gift cards, and 12 residents/families adopted families for gift giving.
- Grown-Ups Go to the Movies – The Committee launched a new Town event for selected Friday evenings to feature documentaries and short films. The inaugural movie, *Red Obsession*, was shown on January 10. Wine and cheese were served at what turned out to be a very well-attended and enjoyable evening. The second and last documentary before next fall will be on March 14.
- Winter Outwear Drive – The drive to collect gently used or unused winter coats and accessories is running from January through February. Donations, which are being collected at the Town Office, will go to meet the needs of poor and homeless persons in Montgomery County.
- Property Tax Assessment Talk – Gerard Barber, Assessor Manager of the State of Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation, gave a very informative talk and answered questions about the property tax assessment process and related issues on February 5. Twenty-three interested residents attended.
- Winter Round House Theatre Event – A night at Round House Theatre to see *Seminar*, to be followed by an after-show reception, is scheduled for February 13.
- Chili Dinner – The Town's annual Chili Dinner on February 23 will add a new feature this year: an ice cream sundae bar. The ever-popular entertainment for children will also be provided. To continue the Town's support of Manna Food Center, donations of non-perishable food, cash, and checks will be gratefully accepted.
- Among future planned events this year are a repeat of the very popular Progressive Dinner in March, another Saturday afternoon Drum Circle for residents of all ages, the annual Bake-Off, Dinner Out at Vino Volo, a Garden Tour, another Classical Music Concert, and a Discussion and Desserts speaker.